

months at a time. Members of both parties came to the table ready to work, debate and negotiate.

For many years, legislation was drafted from the middle, and we passed bipartisan bills frequently. It wasn't uncommon for an important bill to get 400-plus votes; we didn't stop just because we had 218. Members didn't engage in partisan misbehavior for the sake of a good Twitter hit or the opportunity to call out the other side on cable news. Rather, members had respect for one another and for the political spectrum. They managed to limit outside parties from disrupting the legislative process for political gain.

We in Congress are tearing our country apart and weakening the foundation established by great leaders before us. Is anyone in Congress truly proud that we have not produced a budget? That we caused the downgrading of U.S. government securities, as well as appalling disorder and confusion in financial markets? Or that this situation caused the lack of job creation and economic growth that has contributed to the hopelessness and misfortune of millions of Americans?

Wrangling by all parties, from the top down, cripples our work, and media that encourage confrontation instead of negotiation fuel the fire. Being locked into this system of starting from the far left or the far right and then doing just enough for passage may get a single bill done, but it's not a system that produces the best law that does the most good for all Americans.

This partisan viciousness needs to stop.

I am ashamed of our recent record. I am disgusted with our performance, Republican and Democratic alike. There has been failed leadership and, worse, failed following within the ranks—and we owe the country far better. My daddy taught me that if God had wanted us to talk more and listen less, he would have given us two mouths and one ear. In our most combative moments, we must remember that no cause is greater than this institution and the ideals on which it was founded; no single man or woman is greater than this body and the collective wisdom we are capable of exhibiting. If we hold on to that core principle, we can make changes that will be better for Congress as an institution and for the American people.

We must all help this body improve and call upon our colleagues to join in doing better. It is our duty. If we do not, the people, in their righteous and justified outrage, will get rid of us all—as well they should. I beg my friends in Congress and the administration to put the interests of this great nation before partisan political interests and not let the rivalries of the past prevent us from acting in ways that will better the future of our nation.

The writer, a Democrat from Michigan, is dean of the U.S. House of Representatives and a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, September 12, 2011, I was unable to be present for recorded votes. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” on rollcall vote No. 699 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 2076, as amended), “yes” on rollcall vote No. 700 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 2633, as

amended) and “yes” on rollcall vote No. 701 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1059).

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today our national debt is \$14,717,868,058,346.24.

On January 6, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$4,079,442,312,052.44 since then. This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

“CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES” PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the winners of the “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement award from the HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona, given to encourage and reward personal achievement within its community. HealthSouth has presented rehabilitation awards to members of their community who have remained steadfast in overcoming an illness or disability. This year I congratulate: Danielle Gibbons and Frank Germino, winners of the “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement Award; and Shelly Beaver, Sherri McGregor, and Joe Reed, winners of the Advocate Award.

Danielle Gibbons is the winner of the HealthSouth “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement Award. On June 18, 2010, Danielle, 37 years old at the time and a single mother of two, was involved in a motor vehicle accident. Danielle was driving when another vehicle crossed the center line and hit her head on. The other driver was killed and Danielle was left with life threatening injuries. Danielle had to be cut out of the car, and was transported to the hospital where surgeons were ready to amputate her right leg. Instead, she insisted that she be flown to Pittsburgh where she underwent nine surgeries in order to keep her right leg. In October 2010, Danielle began physical therapy and she made remarkable progress. In less than one year, she was ambulating independently. Danielle has returned to work full time as a nurse practitioner. I commend her for her perseverance and good attitude.

Frank Germino is also the recipient of the HealthSouth “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement Award. On October 9, 2010, Frank's life was changed forever when he fell 12 feet from a tree stand while hunting. Frank broke his back in five places. After a five hour surgery, he was told that he would never walk again due to the extensive damage

that was incurred. Frank was determined to walk again and after months of rehab and therapy, Frank did just that. His courageous spirit is an inspiration to everyone around him.

Shelly Beaver and Sherri McGregor are the recipients of the HealthSouth Advocate Award. Through the efforts of Shelly Beaver, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, and Sherri McGregor, Education and Training Specialist at Penn State Altoona, “Sense-ational Endeavors” was developed. The program creates a combination of sensory activities, physical movement, and social skill development. In addition to therapeutic programs, campers engage in recreational activities and exercise tailored to their ability. Both Shelly and Sherri have dedicated their lives to enriching the lives of countless children.

Joe Reed is also the recipient of the HealthSouth Advocate Award. Joe is responsible for bringing a Miracle League to Blair County. The Miracle League provides baseball for all children with special needs. The field is constructed using a cushioned rubber surface with everything flat and level so there is nothing to trip over. Joe first heard about the Miracle League during a trip to Moody, Alabama while visiting friends in the fall of 2003. About two weeks later he read about it in the Kiwanis Magazine and knew this was something that Blair County needed. He returned to the Moody field, and then went to see the original Miracle League field in Conyers, Georgia. There, he met with the Executive Director of the Miracle League Association, Diane Alford. After getting permission to use the land owned by the Kiwanis Club of Eldorado, he assembled a Board of Directors in early 2004 and began fundraising and promotion. Joe raised over \$150,000. Construction began in the fall of 2006. The total cost of the project was \$497,000. Opening day was July 21, 2007 with 24 children. Today they have 125 players and over 175 volunteers.

Congratulations to Danielle, Frank, Shelly, Sherri, and Joe. Their accomplishments are a testament to us all that with hard work, persistence, and a big heart, we can overcome any hardship. I congratulate each of them on their perseverance, and I wish them the best as they continue to overcome illnesses and disabilities while setting an example for the rest of the community.

TRIBUTE TO LANCE CPL. TRAVIS MICHAEL NELSON

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Lance Cpl. Travis Michael Nelson who recently lost his life in the service of his country. We will always be indebted to his sacrifice for our freedom and we join his family and many friends in mourning his loss.

Lance Cpl. Nelson was assigned as a rifleman with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He lost his life during combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on August 18, 2011, one month after his unit's arrival.

He was a dedicated Marine who loved his country and loved the Marine Corps. He always wanted to be a Marine and beginning at